

Rackenford Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113495
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	363807
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Stephen Lake

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	74
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Hyland
Headteacher	Caroline Buckley
Date of previous school inspection	5 June 2008
School address	Rackenford Tiverton EX16 8DU
Telephone number	01884881354
Fax number	01884 881354
Email address	admin@rackenford-primary.devon.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 11 lessons or parts of lessons seeing three teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body and staff. A sample of parents and carers were spoken to at the start of the day. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's own evaluation of its work and the school improvement plan. They also looked at records on pupils' attainment and progress and documents relating to vulnerable pupils. The questionnaires completed by staff, pupils and 56 parents and carers were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The achievement of gifted and talented pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging.
- The impact of the school's strategies to improve assessment.
- The use of partnerships, visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum and support community cohesion and cultural development.
- The involvement of teachers and governors in school self-evaluation.
- The impact of strategies to improve writing including in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This school is much smaller than most primary schools. It serves a very rural area but a few pupils come from nearby towns such as Tiverton. The vast majority of pupils are White British with no pupils from other ethnic groups. No pupils speak English as an additional language and no pupils are currently known to be entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average but the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. The school has just achieved Healthy Schools Plus Status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Rackenford is a good school. It is continuing to improve because good leadership and management are ensuring a consistent focus on raising attainment. Pupils' excellent social skills result in outstanding behaviour and a calm, harmonious community where pupils become mature and confident learners. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and how to keep fit and healthy because of the good-quality care and guidance they receive. Links with parents and carers are excellent.

Consistently good teaching and a good-quality curriculum ensure that pupils achieve well. Children get a good start to their education in Reception and enter Year 1 with levels of skill above those normally found at this age, although their writing is not as strong as their other skills. The introduction of the 'Talk to Write' project, where pupils are encouraged to talk through their work before beginning their writing, has improved pupils' progress in writing and their overall attainment at the end of Year 6 is consistently above average. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and the local community but this is not yet extended to the world beyond Devon in a systematic and rigorous manner. Staff and governors have recognised this and have started to review the provision for promoting community cohesion.

The school has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses and uses the information gained well in the school improvement plan. The strong leadership of the headteacher ensures that all members of staff work as a team to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Governors support the school well and are closely involved in school self-evaluation. Together with the staff they share a strong desire to raise standards and work together effectively to improve the provision. A much improved system for recording and analysing data on pupils' attainment and progress is in place. This is quite recent and is not yet used to its full potential to provide high-quality information for senior leaders and governors. The strengths identified at the previous inspection have been maintained and action plans are already in place to address the areas for improvement noted in this report. These factors indicate good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2012 ensure that pupils have more opportunities to learn about other cultures by:
 - setting out clear strategies for the promotion of community cohesion
 - developing effective systems for evaluating the impact of these strategies.
- Provide senior leaders and governors with a clear picture on the performance of cohorts and groups by September 2011 by:

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- embedding the new systems for recording and analysing data on pupils' progress
- ensuring that data are analysed in a more sophisticated manner.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils say they enjoy school immensely. This is evident in their enthusiasm for learning and their good attendance. Children start school with overall levels of skill similar to those found nationally, although there is considerable variation from year to year and their skills in communication, language and literacy are lower than those normally found. They make good progress to begin Year 1 with above average attainment and build securely on this good start through the rest of the school so that pupils in Year 6 are on track to attain well-above-average levels of attainment in 2011.

Pupils' excellent behaviour helps them to engage well in their learning; learning observed by inspectors was consistently good, and sometimes outstanding. More-able pupils and those identified as gifted and talented achieve well because the work challenges them effectively. For example, in a good science lesson in Year 6, more-able pupils very confidently discussed how a simple jet boat powered by a very small candle worked and designed their own investigation using the boat. Pupils came up with some excellent ideas such as varying the weight carried or changing the number of candles to see the effect on speed. Several determined quite quickly the scientific facts behind the working of the boat and explained them confidently to an inspector. Teaching assistants are used effectively to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully included in lessons. This good provision ensures that they too make good progress.

Pupils were adamant that there is no bullying and said they felt very safe in school. They trust all adults to deal with any problems that might occur. Pupils undertake a wide range of responsibilities, such as being school council members, which contribute well to school life. They show curiosity about and interest in the wider local community through activities such as the Tiverton children's parliament; of particular note is the way pupils have supported the re-instatement of the village well and provided information cards about the wildlife that can be seen on the marked walks starting from the well. However, they do not have a strong enough understanding of life in different parts of the United Kingdom or of different cultures. Pupils' very secure understanding of how to stay healthy and keep fit is recognised by the Healthy School Plus award. It is also evident in the enthusiastic way pupils take advantage of the very good range of lunchtime and after-school sports clubs. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and work together extremely well. Their good basic skills, including their information and communication technology (ICT) skills, prepare them well for the next stage in their education.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Pupils learn well in this school because teachers prepare highly motivating lessons that make good use of ICT and are based on a stimulating curriculum. Very good opportunities are taken to develop literacy skills through other subjects such as science, history and geography. Visitors and stimulating visits to places of interest, including the bi-annual visit to France and to HMS Belfast in London, make learning purposeful and support the strategies for promoting community cohesion. Good partnerships enable opportunities for other activities such as inter-school sport.

Assessment procedures have improved and are robust. For example, in an outstanding lesson for younger children on writing instructions for preparing rhubarb crumble, a series of photographs were set out with time connectives between them. Pupils chose the verbs required when giving instructions related to each photograph while success criteria set out in their books enabled them to assess their own work alongside the teacher. Questioning by teachers challenges pupils, extends their learning and helps teachers assess what pupils already know. For example, in a good lesson involving the properties of shapes the teacher skilfully modified the activities so that pupils at all levels of attainment were suitably challenged. All adults in the lesson used questioning well to help pupils build on their prior learning and then assess their own work. Teachers' marking is good, although better in English than in mathematics, and gives clear guidance to pupils on how to

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improve their work. Less attention is given to presentation and in some cases boys do not take as much care over the presentation of their English work as they do in mathematics.

Pastoral care is strong. Good-quality child protection procedures are detailed and well known to all staff. The school works very closely with parents and carers to support their children's learning through parent-teacher consultations, regular informal discussion and the use of innovative systems to pass on relevant information. The latter include letters setting out the themes and topics being studied and text messages for such things as reminders and requests. Parents and carers particularly liked the workshops run by pupils. Good links with external agencies ensure that vulnerable pupils are supported well.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, governors and staff share a very strong ambition to ensure that the best possible education is provided for all pupils. Robust procedures are in place to tackle any incidents of discrimination, and equality of opportunity is assured by the great care taken to monitor the progress of all groups. Regular training for staff and governors and close monitoring by the governing body ensure safeguarding requirements are met well. A good start has been made on auditing existing provision for the promotion of community cohesion and plans to widen its scope.

All governors monitor the school's work closely through focused visits that are recorded and reported back at meetings. Their good budget management has enabled a move from two and a half classes to three classes and high-quality changes to the buildings and site to improve the provision for the Reception class. Governors undertake regular training and play an active role in evaluating the work of the school and setting its strategic direction. Regular meetings with subject leaders ensure governors are very well informed before they meet with all staff to discuss the school improvement plan in great detail. Parents, carers and pupils are consulted regularly and the governing body holds open meetings and invites parents and carers to attend as observers. The importance attached to involving parents and carers can be seen in the high-quality newsletters that invite them to proffer their views on areas such as potential federation or the cost of school meals.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Close and positive relationships with the local pre-school groups as well as with parents and carers ensure that children settle quickly and happily into the warm and very stimulating environment of the Early Years Foundation Stage. High-quality care helps children to feel secure and confident, and their welfare needs are met very well. The excellent partnership between children and adults, and a focus on praise, ensure exemplary behaviour.

Children display very positive attitudes and learn to relate well to others. Because children start school with lower levels of skill in communication, language and literacy, a programme of work based on developing talking linked to writing has been introduced and this is already proving effective; progress in writing is now good. Adults ensure a good balance of teacher-directed and self-chosen activities, which helps children to develop as confident learners.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well. Good quality systems for checking on children's progress are used effectively to plan work that challenges them to achieve well. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified at an early stage, enabling effective support to be provided. The recent move to a larger room with a new good-quality covered outdoor area is enabling a more exciting curriculum to be developed. The Reception class makes particularly good use of the area outside the classroom to provide stimulating activities such as the garden centre shop that make learning interesting. Slightly fewer opportunities for writing are provided outside and plans are in hand to address this.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A well-above-average proportion of parents and carers completed the questionnaire. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Some chose to add written comments which were mostly very positive. Typical of the positive comments was, 'Very pleased with the school • I am very proud he goes to Rackenford School.'

There were no areas in which a significant number of parents and carers expressed concern although a very small minority do not think their children enjoy school. Inspectors found a very high level of enjoyment among pupils with a number describing school as 'brilliant'.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rackenford Church of England Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 56 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 74 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	66	15	27	4	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	79	12	21	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	33	59	22	39	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	54	24	43	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	34	61	21	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	57	22	39	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	68	18	32	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	31	55	21	38	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	54	23	41	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	55	20	36	2	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	54	25	45	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	36	64	20	36	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	61	20	36	2	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



20 May 2011

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Rackenford Church of England Primary School, Tiverton, EX16 8DU

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school and talking to us about the things that you like there. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour. Rackenford is a good school. Here are some of the things that we liked.

- You get a good start to your school life in the Reception class.
- Your achievement is good and you attain better than most children your age because of the good teaching you receive.
- Your school makes learning interesting and fun because of the good range of enjoyable activities provided for you.
- The school looks after you well, which is why your understanding of how to stay safe and keep healthy is outstanding.
- You make a good contribution to the running of the school through the school council and other jobs that you do.
- The school is led and managed well by your headteacher and the people who help her.
- Your parents and carers get many excellent opportunities to be involved with the school.

To help make your school even better we have asked the staff and governors to:

- improve the ways you learn about people across the United Kingdom and the wider world
- use the new systems for checking on how well you are doing in an even better way so that they can easily compare your school with other schools nationally.

You can help by continuing to work as hard as you can.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lake
Lead inspector

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